Route 12 - Old Receiver Rd.
Frederick, Md. 21701

August 31, 1976

Mr. Abby Mann
15622 Meadowgate Road
Encino, Calif. 91316

Dear Mr. Mann:

I have been informed that you have completed a documentary on the JFK assassination and are preparing another on the King assassination, in association with Mark Lane, Don Freed and others.

There is a popular mythology, popular among plagiarists and other kinds of literary thieves, that once nonfiction is published it becomes their property. This has, in fact, become the practice of the glib ones to whom original, honest work is foreign and self-promotion is an end unto itself. With repetition these sick and amoral people come to believe they actually did the work they steal. They also come to believe themselves real experts when they are not, except in their self-promotions.

Obviously, until it is out I have no way of knowing the content of your film, as I also have no way of knowing what you will include in that on the King assassination. I do know that it is sometimes necessary to deal on a basis of trust, especially if one comes to believe these self-promotions without knowing whether or not there is a factual basis for them. I can also assume you felt you had reason to impart trust.

However, what troubles me about a limitless willingness to assume only good faith on your part and that, if there is dishonesty in your production, it is all innocent is a simple fact: It is not possible to consult any standard research source or any good library without knowing that, beginning with the very first book on the Warren Commission, I have published more than anyone else on this subject and have filed more Freedom of Information requests and lawsuits on it than anyone else if not all others combined. Yet you have not been in touch with me.

Whatever your impression of them may be or whatever you may have been told about them by themselves and others, from my personal experience you are dealing with a long-time crook and a would-be crook if he has not succeeded with others, plus an odd bag hanging onto them while nibbling away at the work of others.

My personal experience is extensive and is abundantly supported by evidence. I will give you two examples.

The ego-sick Lane, who has come to believe he owns the subject of the JFK assassination when from the first he has been an animated disaster in it except to himself, has stolen my work when he could have duplicated it had he not also been lazy. Then, unable to admit to himself that others have done what he was unable to do, he actually invented fake footnotes to nonexistent sources for it. While this is anything but a unique case, it is a good one because he is also a wretchedly ungrateful man whose sickness of the head drives him to the irrational.

Never dreaming the kind of rascal he really is, I gave him a Washington TV show I had scheduled. Also because I believe all responsible work in the field of my interests should receive attention, I was responsible for his Citizen's Dissent being plugged on a widely-syndicated book-and-author show of a friend of mine. All of this before I read that monument to sickest narcissism. Except as a measure of the man and his ethics and as one of the major assists of that period to the many federal miscreants, this is of no real consequence. With considerable misrepresentation - and on my own show and to my face - Mark represented my work as his own. That, after I had read his apotheosis of personal dishonesty in Citizen"s Dissent, was a bit too much. So I let him have it, then and there, on the air. He weaseled and pled a "printer"s error". On the time out for a commercial, he said he would punch my nose after the show. Despite the difference in our ages, I invited him not to wait. I have the studio tape. And my undamaged nose.

Lane said that this "printer's error" would be corrected in subsequent prints. I have the reprint and because it was not a printer's error but was Lane in his natural crookedness it was not "corrected." To correct that book is to junk it.

This and badmouthing as he travels are the real Lane.

The last time I reeeived a report that he had threatened to sue me when I was truthful in response to questions about him, I wrote him a certified letter in which I said that if what was reported was not enough basis for suit then he could use what I then wrote. And if that were not enough, I'd give him more. He has not responded.

It will be his most desperate moment if he ever does. This is tragic because he is able. Always on the right side on questions of principle, never unselfishly and frequently without personal principle.

I have done the only book not in accord with the official mythology on the King assassination. Freed dickered with me over a long period of time in which he held pie in the sky until I asked for specifics. Then I got glittering generalities until he had to put something on paper. In any formulation - and I have them all - it is meaningless and there is no response to my request for meaningful assurances.

Thereafter Freed, also using others, began to try to duplicate what he could not steal by contract.

I think you can understand with each of us on a different coast I do have records. I also have a series of reports from dependable people of these efforts to steal. Some people associated with Freed on this are pretty far-out. I am not unfamiliar with either their records or their writings, some of it pretty reprehensible.

Because of a recent quite literal stealing I have had to make inquiries about what protections and remedies may be available. I have in this way learned that plagiarism is not the only actionable offense.

Perhaps you have committed no offense. The prior records of such projects and of your reported associates do not encourage faith in the probability. And you are not an expert on either subject, as remarkably few are. So you also may have no way of knowing.

However, because your film has not yet been issued, I suggest the course of caution and fairness - to you, your backers, your insurers and others of whom I am one - requires that you assure yourself while there remains time. One means is by sending me a copy of the script or a tape of the sound-track. If you want further judgments, there are two college professors I can recommend, men who are affiliated with no group. I would also strongly recommend a brilliant young law student who has written his own excellent book and is one of the few authentic experts, as distinguished from the synthetics created by their own self-promotions.

On the King assassination, I have a new work largely completed. The damage to me from the unauthorized use of any of my work will not, therefore, be limited to what can be done to my earlier work.

I am aware of the oil that has poured over and masked some of these forked tongues. There is nothing further I can now do, particularly from so great a distance. I do tell you that the last time I made a joint appearance with Mark his lies were so outrageous I had to ask him why he lies and pretends knowledge he does not have, why he fabricates when the truth would make his point much better. The net result of what he does serves the Departments of Disinformation.

If it is outside your experience, then I tell you the spookeries all do this kind of thing. Executive Action is cribbed from one such product, certainly from the French counterpart of the CIA, SDECE, possibly also from the CIA. These kinds of excesses do not serve principle, do not inform people but mislead them and do destroy all credibility. Those without concern for credibility are without concern for these consequences of what they do.

I have heard otherwise of you, that you do have sincere concerns. I hope time and events prove this to be true.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg